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Preached in

LAMBETH CHAPEL

AT THE

CONSECRATION

OF THE

Right Reverend FATHERS in GOD,

JOHN, Lord Bishop of BRISTOL,

A N D

JOHN, Lord Bishop of BANGOR,

On Sunday, July 4. 1756.

By JOHN SPRY, B.D. Archdeacon of *Berks*.

Published, at the Command of His Grace, the Lord
Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, and the Right Reverend
the Bishops, in Commission for the Consecration.

O X F O R D,

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JOHN V. 44.

How can Ye believe, which receive Honour one of another, and seek not the Honour that cometh from God only?

THE Reprehension of the Text has in appearance but little relation to the present Solemnity; neither the Powers here to be conferred, nor the Character assumed, being a reasonable ground, for the Charge of that criminal Ambition, censured by our Saviour, as one principal Source of Infidelity.

BUT, as the Imputation has in fact unjustly fallen, where it might least have been suspected; and as the brightest Ornaments of the Episcopal Dignity have not been secure from the popular Aspersions of *taking too much upon them, and Lording it over God's Heritage*: It may in some measure obviate the Prejudice of this Accusation, to expose the Iniquity itself, in its proper Colours; even in the presence of the Order affected by it.

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THE Pharisees, to whom the Reproof is immediately applied, stand fully convicted, from their known Character. The Apostles themselves, were not all, entirely exempt from the Infirmary. And Instances of the same Weakness, have in all ages been unhappily discovered, among the Successors of the Apostles. Yet, injurious were it, should the Order be wounded by the Discovery; where Personal Deficiencies ought only to be censured. Nor will even These, so frequently occur as the Object of Reproach, if the State of that Distinction, referred to in the words before Us, betwixt the innocent pursuit of True Honour, and the dangerous impressions of an Ambitious Spirit, be attended to, thro' its several Circumstances and Relations.

THE *Honour*, which men receive one of another, and the *Honour which cometh from God only*, are evidently set in Contradistinction to each other. The Former, not as absolutely and simply Evil; (the exclusive Clause sufficiently implying the Innocency of it, in other Cases) but only so, when aspired to, with the neglect of the Latter, in all Events more eligible. And the more remarkable Obliquity of this partial Preference, is here noted, in its Opposition to the Dictates of Religion and Virtue.

I. WITH the View then above proposed, the first Thing to be observed is, That the Desire of Honour, even the Honour of this World, is not to be reputed in itself, as absolutely and simply Evil: — 'Tis only so, when interfering with the *Honour that cometh from God only*.

THERE is indeed a peculiar Blessedness pronounced upon Those, who, far from receiving Honour, *are reviled and persecuted*, in this world, *and shall have all manner of Evil spoken against them falsely, for Christ's sake: Their Reward shall be great in Heaven*. And that terrible Denunciation, on the other Hand; *Woe be unto You, when all Men shall speak well of You*, may seem to be as far from recommending the Innocence and Value of an honourable Distinction; if the Favourites of the World, are to be entirely excluded from being the Favourites of God.

BUT tho' Life itself, and all the Comforts and Enjoyments of Life are to be resigned, in the Cause of God; and tho' such an acceptable Sacrifice hath the Promise of an exceeding great Reward; It cannot certainly be rational to argue, that therefore, Life is not to be desired; or, that there is the least Shew of Evil, in en-

deavouring by Lawful methods to maintain and preserve it. With as little appearance of Reason, can any thing be collected from hence, to depreciate the just Esteem, of a Station, and a Name, due to real Merit; much less, to blacken the Desire of it, with the Imputation of Guilt.

AND, with whatever Apprehensions, that impending *Woe*, may and ought to strike the Consciences of all, who either seek to purchase the Approbation of Men, by unjustifiable Compliances, or to render it subservient to impious Purposes, (a Restriction evidently intended in that place, as well from the subsequent Instance of Illustration, *for so did their Fathers to the false Prophets*, as from the foregoing Threats of a like nature, and necessarily requiring like degrees of limitation) It cannot any otherwise affect the Desire of a superior Station in Life, than that of any other Acquisitions, external or intellectual; which in themselves are the Talents of Divine Beneficence, and only criminal in their Abuse.

As Men by Nature are formed with Faculties adapted to the mutual Service of each other; and as the Bounty of Providence is not to be so confined, as that the Influence of its Gifts should be thought to terminate, in the first and immediate

diatc Object of them; but others are to share the Blessing, tho' seemingly appropriated: It is but rational to infer, that whatever acquired Improvements, those Faculties and Gifts are capable of, must regularly take the same Course, and be conducted to the same End.

THUS it is, with regard to the Honour of a Distinction, acquired by a faithful Discharge and Enlargement of Talents committed in Trust. Its Virtue is diffusive, like *the Odour of a precious Ointment*. Not content with doing Justice to the Character, in whom it principally resides, It becomes Exemplary in its Effects, by exciting the industrious Emulation of others.

IF this then be admitted, as an unexceptionable Evidence of the Excellency of an Honourable Superiority, that it is of so great Advantage to the rest of the World; the very same Consideration will yet evince it further, when applied to the Person, who is thus justly distinguished. To Him, it is Excellent, as it honours him with a Capacity of being so highly beneficial. By Virtue hereof, He becomes a special Instrument in the hand of Providence; commissioned to great and noble Purposes, with Powers proportioned to the Extent of his Commission.

IF it be a just Remark, that a Reputation, once blemished, leaves a certain Stain upon our
best

best Performances; it is as observable, on the other hand, with what a favourable Prejudice, every Action is attended, in One of an established Credit. Even his Infirmities, are either defended, or connived at; and the most ungrateful Offices of Admonition and Reproof, are administered by him, with a peculiar Approbation and Success.

AND, as the Advantage of superior Improvements, when regularly conducted, will from an express Promise entitle the Possessor, to expect higher degrees of the Divine Beneficence, in this respect it may be asserted further, that the Favour of the World, which may grow from these Improvements, is thus far our Qualification for the Favour of God; and as such, may securely be esteemed, as a Pledge and Assurance of Advancement in the End, to Future Glory.

IN Confirmation of these Reflexions, We may take in the Weight of an Apostolical Example; — One, who esteemed it no blemish in his Conduct, that He was careful to conform it to the good Opinion of the World, by *providing for honest things, not only in the Sight of the Lord, but also in the Sight of Men*; — And, who also proposed *things that were of good Report*, and excited Men by the prevalent Motive of *Praise*, as not unworthy the studious Prosecution

cution of those, who were exhorted at the same time, to a diligent Attention, in their applications to *Truth, Honour, and Virtue*.

BUT neither These, nor other Illustrations, which might have been alledged, tho' sufficient to justify the Desire of Honour in this World, considered absolutely, and in itself, will be able to plead for it, in another Light, wherein Our Saviour has here represented it. For,

II. SECONDLY, If it is to be pursued, with the neglect of that *Honour, which cometh from God only*, in all Events more eligible, then is it, that it deviates into a Criminal Ambition.

To judge impartially the merits of this Contest, the Import of that Honour, which is distinguished, as *coming from God only*, is to be impartially weighed; — An Honour, so peculiarly the Produce of the Divine Favour and Approbation, as not to be derived from any other fountain, nor communicated upon other Terms, but what are perfectly consistent with the Honour of God himself; — A Truth, entirely conformable to Man's primary Apprehensions of the Divine Nature, and to the Dictates of that Religion, which are the only Measure of his Subjection.

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THE Goodness of God cannot but flow in, upon our first Conceptions of his Essence, and leads Us directly to regard Him, as the only Happiness of Man. As in Him are collected all the infinite Treasures of Essential Bounty and Beneficence, we necessarily look upon Him, as dispensing the Influence of These, most suitably to his own Glory, in advancing the Glory of his faithful Servants. And this, the Principles of that Obedience, which We owe to a Being, thus infinitely Good, engage Us to pursue, under the notion of our Reward. Happiness is the final Recompence proposed, and with Certainty expected; — And Happiness derived at such an infinite Distance, as from the Creator to the Creature, is certainly an Honour, that claims our highest Reverence and Ambition.

IN Conformity with this Principle, God hath not left Us, even in this World, without sufficient Witness of those Honours, He has reserved for Us. He has his distinguishing Favours, which He bestows as present Pledges; and these are the comfortable foretastes, of what He intends for Us hereafter.

BUT then, these are not always to be expected, so apparently, in the visible Course of his Ordinary Providence, as in the secret Satisfaction of a Good Man's Conscience, and the well-grounded

grounded Hopes of a blessed Immortality. Here, He may meet with an Applause, as far surpassing the Triumphs and Acclamations of a popular Esteem, as superior to the Censures, and invincible to the Menaces, of an ungrateful World. Whether flattering Smiles, or insolent and malicious Frowns attack him from without, He can resolutely take Sanctuary within his own Breast, and there be fully *satisfied from Himself*. The World can neither rob him of this Honour, nor propose any Equivalent so effectual, as to engage him to forgoe the Glory of it.

THERE is also, in the Progress of Virtue itself, (which, among other *good and perfect Gifts*, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights) when uniform and unaffected, steady and composed, so amiable a Character, impressed in so lively a manner, as to command Esteem and Veneration, even where it fails of being imitated. For tho' the Persons of Good Men, are frequently exposed to Infamy and Contempt, and their *Names cast out as evil, for the Sake of Man's*, yet how seldom do We meet with that hardy Spirit, who dares openly to attack Virtue, as the Object of his professed Aversion? And even before the Man of distinguished Piety can decently be made a Sacrifice, it must be pretended at least, that He has apostatised from

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Virtue ;

Virtue; or his Virtues are to be obscured, by Slander and Detraction. — A tacit Confession, that Virtue in itself, is sacred and inviolable, and in the unprejudiced Opinion of Mankind, highly honourable and approved.

H E R E then lies that Excellency of Dignity and Honour, sufficient to charge the Ballance against all the Glories of this World: — The Consciousness of Virtue, permanent and eternal; with its inestimable Rewards, both present and future; in opposition to all the flattering Allurements of an empty, temporary Applause.

B U T if these are *found wanting*; if *deceitful upon the weights*; no wonder, if they prove *lighter, than even Vanity itself*. The vain glorious Appetites will prevail, when the Restraints of Religion are taken out of the way; and a kind of Idolatrous Tyranny be erected, upon the Ruins of Conscience and Integrity. At least, the Temptations will appear so lively, and so affecting, as with the Strength of human Precaution only (tho' called upon to assist; — which is not commonly the Case) not easily to be resisted with Success.

T H O S E repeated Assurances of Advancement, in the Court of *Balak*, were enough to have staggered a Disposition, far more resolute and inflexible, than *Balaam's*; Had not the Obligations

ligations of his Duty, been supernaturally represented to him, upon the Occasion, as highly superior to any Views of temporal Interest. And even *Balak* saw the motive (tho' He saw it with the Derision of an Infidel) of the Prophet's uncourtly Behaviour. *I thought indeed, says He, to have promoted thee to great Honour; But lo! the Lord hath kept thee back from Honour.* And in reply, *Balaam* fixes This, as the utmost Limit of His, and every Good Man's compliance, (further than which, the most inviting Prospect of Preferment could not engage him to proceed) *I cannot go, beyond the Commandment of the Lord.*

III. BUT these are general Remarks. We may thirdly, observe the more remarkable Obliquity of this partial Preference, in its noted Opposition to the dictates of Religion and Virtue.

MANY of the principal Doctrines of Christianity are affected by it:—Many pernicious Qualities, in fact attending it, too evidently discover its Inconsistency, with the Simplicity and Steadiness of Christian Practice.

THE Perfection of a Religious FAITH consists, in *casting down Imaginations, and every high thing, that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God, and bringing into Captivity, every*

Thought to the Obedience of Christ. There is a Submissive Deference to be paid to the sublime Mysteries of Revelation. *The things of the Spirit of God, are foolishness unto the Natural Man.* And yet, with all his boasted Wisdom, and the acquired Improvements of his Knowledge, He must submit to *become a Fool, that He may be truly wise.*

AND will This be consistent with the Sceptical pursuits, the lofty Views and Expectations, of *the Wise, of the Scribe, of the Disputer of this World?* Vanity is no where more conspicuous, or more obstinate, than in these projecting Spirits. To be limited, within the Circuit of Establishments, tho' ever so well grounded, is with them, little and inglorious. Singularity will separate them from the credulous Multitude, and make them *a Name, and a Praise in the Earth.*

HUMILITY, is a Virtue eminently conspicuous in the Christian Law. The first in order of our Saviour's list of Evangelical Blessings, is pronounced upon the *Poor in Spirit.* And We are called upon, to *be subject, one to another; in Honour preferring one another.* There are Offices due to Persons of the lowest rank, from the discharge of which, the highest are not exempt. A truly Christian Condescension is fired with the Glory, of excelling in advances of
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favour and esteem in behalf of others; choosing rather to wave the pretensions of any valuable Perfection in itself, than *by proclaiming every Man his own Goodness*; to diminish the Character of others, which might possibly suffer by the Comparison.

BUT, what an irreconcilable Antipathy is there to this Duty, in the partial Fondness of an aspiring Mind? — Fond of every opportunity to recommend itself, and with the most scrupulous Horror, averse to every the least notice of its own Defects. If the Man submits to cast his Eyes below him, 'tis only to collect matter for his Pride and Insolence. Should He palliate the faults of others; or, with a charitable Tenderness undertake to represent their actions in the most favourable Light; much more, should He condescend to give Merit its just Praise, this might be of dangerous Consequence to his own Views, as He might possibly from hence excite a Rival to Himself — But, to yield and submit, in point of Honour, is a Thought yet more terrible and shocking. — So just and rational was the Opposition, in the Precept of the Apostle, betwixt two the most incompatible Dispositions; *Mind not high things; but condescend to Men of low Estate.*

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A CONTEMPT of the World, and the Glories of it, for Conscience sake, is another principal Doctrine of the Gospel of Christ. It is possible indeed, that Many may not be called to this Trial. Persecution is not the Lot of all. But that all, who profess the Name of Christ, are to hold themselves in readiness, to endure *the Loss of all things*, whenever the Competition shall be started betwixt Interest and Duty, is not to be disputed, as a Matter dubious or unreasonable.

BUT, *Take up thy Cross daily, and follow me*, is a hard Saying in the Ears of One, whose affections are strongly rooted in the Enjoyments of Life, and nourished under the pleasing Prospect of growing Grandeur and Advancement. And yet, to grasp at all, and at the same to sit loose to all, are certainly Services as incompatible with each other, as the Masters they relate to, are invariably opposite: *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*.

As inconsistent with True Religion, are many pernicious Qualities, in fact the inseparable Attendants of Ambition. Two are principally remarkable. The Want of Sincerity, and the Want of Religious Courage. — The One, an Insult upon every good Principle; — The Other, the Parent of every Vice.

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TRUTH is often too bold and insolent an Intruder, to find a favourable Admittance with the Great and Powerful ; — Seldom, will it help to advance, or recommend. The Language of Ambition will be soft and seasonable ; Disguises, and Art, and Courtesy, having a much more promising Aspect, than unbiassed Honesty and Integrity.

UNDER this encouragement are introduced, all those well-known Strains of Diffimulation and Flattery, so speciously practised, both in public and private Life ; — That hardly-to-be-suspected Affectation of Good-nature and Benevolence, expressing itself in an easy Indolence of being pleased with every thing that passes ; — That abasement of Characters and Relations, however respectable ; which the Ambitious Mind is ever prepared to submit to ; — And, That vilest of all Prostitutions, the Mask of Conscience, Piety and Devotion.

AND as to the Want of Religious Courage and Resolution, it is as evident, that neither Piety nor Integrity, can long maintain their Station, while liable to be shaken, by every apprehension of Terror. The Look of an Ambitious Prostitute, is indeed frequently bold and resolute enough ; But, how his Breast is continually harrassed with tumults and disorders of another kind,

kind, He has it not in his Power, always to conceal. Fear discovers itself, to be the governing Principle of his Soul, and to conduct the Motion of his Actions and Designs. No Evil can be more affecting to him, than Infamy and Disgrace. Tho' it be only a Name of Reproach, it is more terrible than Death; and all Methods will be held justifiable, to guard against the Insults of Calumny and Detraction.

THE *Wise Man* observes, That *the Fear of Man bringeth a Snare*. There is Treachery in the first Impression, as it robs a Man of those Succours, which might usefully be employed, to obviate his Danger: But greater Treachery in the Event, as it proposes the Use of such present Remedies, as however promising in appearance, cannot but betray to more important Dangers. What those are, is sufficiently implied, in the Expostulation of the Prophet, *Who art Thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a Man that shall die, and of the Son of Man, who shall be made as Grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?* As if the Consequence were in a manner irresistible, from entertaining, and grovelling under the slavish Suggestions of the One, to renouncing Confidence and Security in the Other.

THESE then must be reputed, as Certain Evidences of the Obliquity of this ardent Thirst after Human Honour and Esteem: — Standing so apparently condemned, as an Enemy of all Righteousness; — The Perverter of Simplicity and Truth; — And a constant Check to the Discharge of Religious Obligations.

THIS complicated Charge, however disagreeable in Description, cannot but enliven the pleasing Impressions of a more Illustrious Scene. And will not the Contrast, which has been in View thro' the Whole, secure the Subject, from being maliciously, or even inadvertently applied; and add Dignity to an Ambition, every way the Reverse, both in its Motives and Productions?

WHAT are the Honours of this Sacred Office, the Object of our present Attention, but Honours of Apostolical Institution? — And therefore, in their Pursuit, Innocent at least: — in their Acquisition, the Venerable Support of anxious Cares, and Labours. — Honours, in a strict Propriety, *coming from God only*. — Honours, recommended as *desireable*, under the Character of *a good Work*. — Honours, in a *double* proportion, assigned to the important Duty, of *Ruling Well*.

THE detracting Scoffer then will most grossly pervert the Nature of things, by reducing these

these Honours, to the Standard of assuming Vanity, in order to render them the Subject of his Derision. In this their primary Allotment, they are by no means the proper Fewel of worldly Ambition; The Dignity, and the Office, being in fact so intimately connected, as under the Protection of One common Origin, to claim in common, the same Veneration and Regard.

BUT if Offence be taken at the Splendor of Secular Acquisitions; — Titles, Power, and Revenue, grafted upon a Spiritual Promotion; — allowing the Case, under these Circumstances, to be the same with that of merely Secular Promotions; and that even the Office of a Bishop may, under this Character, be aspired to, with Sinister Views, and under Sinister Directions; — Yet, what will be the Consequence? — Surely, not that it is necessarily so in fact. This would be more, than ought to be assumed from a bare Possibility. — Nor, if a Desire of the Honours of this World, is not simply Evil, can any reason be assigned, why it should be reputed so, in the Case before Us. For, where the Object of pursuit is innocent, and the Measures applied, no other than justifiable; and especially, where the noted Criterion is wanting, appealed to by our Blessed Saviour, — the evident Traces of Irreligion and Infidelity, — The
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Charge will but Aim, where it cannot possibly Wound, and hardly be of force, to leave even the Scar of Infamy behind it.

AND, while the Fountain of Honour continues to flow pure and undefiled;—while the Streams of Royal Favour are directed to the Promotion of Piety and Religion, in the Choice of fit Persons to Preside in the Government of the Church;—while the Polity of this Society resides with Those, who are revered, as the Ornament of their Profession, and a lively Exemplar to successive Pastors;—the Imaginary Guilt of an aspiring Ambition, will fly before the Face of unsullied Integrity and Merit, and leave no Countenance for the Reproaches of unreasonable Men.

WHILE the Learning, the Piety, the Loyalty of those, who are called to so Honourable a Ministration, are exerted with Vigour and Intrepidity, against the Attacks of Superstitious Ignorance and Fallacy, — of Infidelity and Profaneness, — of perjured Treason and Sedition; — The Aids of whatever Secular Advantages may attend them, will, and ought to be estimated, not barely as things Innocent in themselves; but, as the Reward of Labours, tending to the Public Prosperity, and effectual Instruments of their Success.

FROM the sensible Fruits, and future Prospect of this Success, the present Generation may be instructed, how to value their own Happiness. May We learn, not to calumniate and accuse the vigilant Assertors of our Religious and Civil Liberties; nor enviously to Cavil at those Distinctions of Superiority, so wisely calculated for the noblest Purposes.

BUT if Prejudice and Impiety are still to triumph; and presumptuous Men will judge, or even make, themselves unworthy to share the Blessing, Posterity will, We hope, receive it, and rejoice in it. When They shall taste the Fruits, thus happily entailed, They cannot but look back, with Reverence, to the Hand of the laborious and *faithful Steward*; and *esteem Him very highly in Love, for his Works sake.*

AND, May the Honours of this weighty Trust, aspired to with Integrity and Zeal for God's Service, descend to After-ages, with an ample Increase of Veneration, and their Excellence be recorded, in every grateful Heart, till Temporal Honours shall be no more;—till swallowed up and consummated in never-fading, and Eternal Honour.

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I N I S.

Published by the same AUTHOR.

The Influence of Education justified, with Regard to the Profession of Christianity. A Sermon preached before the University of *Oxford*, at *St. Mary's*, *May 6. 1744.*

The Duty of Christian Confidence in Times of Danger to the Church of Christ. A Sermon Preached before the University of *Oxford*, at *St. Mary's*, on Occasion of the late Rebellion.

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